

New World Order

Stone, Paper, Scissors

The New World Order has become a buzz-phrase of our time. **Charles Jencks**, writer on architecture and postmodernism, turns his attention to the post-modern world and the New World Order. He suggests the latter has much in common with the old game of 'stone, paper and scissors'

A year ago President Bush's greatest perceived fault was what he called 'the vision thing' - the inability to find the grand idea to catalyse his administration and inspire the US. Thanks to Mikhail Gorbachev and Saddam Hussein it has now fallen into his lap. Today every travelling statesman who steps off a plane can be expected to clarify the 'New World Order' (or NWO as it might ironically be known) and think-tanks are frantically engaged in figuring out if the phrase has any possible substance. A certain irony is not unwarranted, since the ghosts of defunct NWOs, like the League of Nations, still haunt our memory. That institution failed because it had no effective police power and could not stop Japan attacking China, Italy invading Abyssinia and

the USSR attacking Finland. Nation-states, the great creation of the modern world, were superior to a supranational body - has a 'New World Order' really emerged?

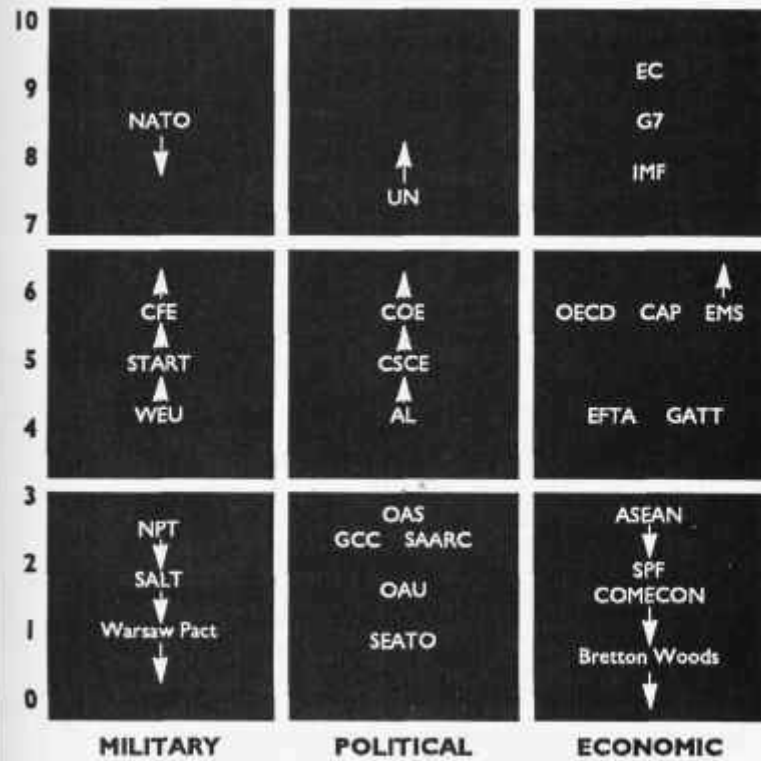
The phrase has been in common use since September 6, when James Baker reported to the US congress on his ideas for a 'new order' in the Middle East. His proposal, an acronym like Nato called Meato, was quickly rubbished by senators as 'Gulfo' - a strategy close to Bush's golf-playing brinkmanship of August. Baker admitted 'we have only begun our thinking', and since then other statesmen have adopted the term, especially Gorbachev when he seeks to divert attention from domestic problems. The phrase signals a world system that has been working, however imperfectly, for five months, a new form of government strange enough to have remained partly hidden to its own

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creators. And there is the hope. For the first time since 1945 there is the opportunity for institutionalising a system that contains national aggression - if only the leaders could appreciate the bizarre mechanism they proclaim so loudly. It has several components. The most obvious is perhaps not a component at all, but the shift in ideology following the end of the cold war - the consensus regarding a market economy and sustained growth. Now most countries understand the importance of the global marketplace and the way piecemeal growth - which can be impressive over 10 years - will be achieved only if there is stability and international law. Utopian revolutions, great leaps forward, jumping economic stages and conquest of neighbours simply do not achieve the results claimed for them in the modern past. Now virtually everybody knows, from the examples of

Figure 1: The Power Of The Acronyms
Showing the three basic tiers and those which are rising and falling in influence.

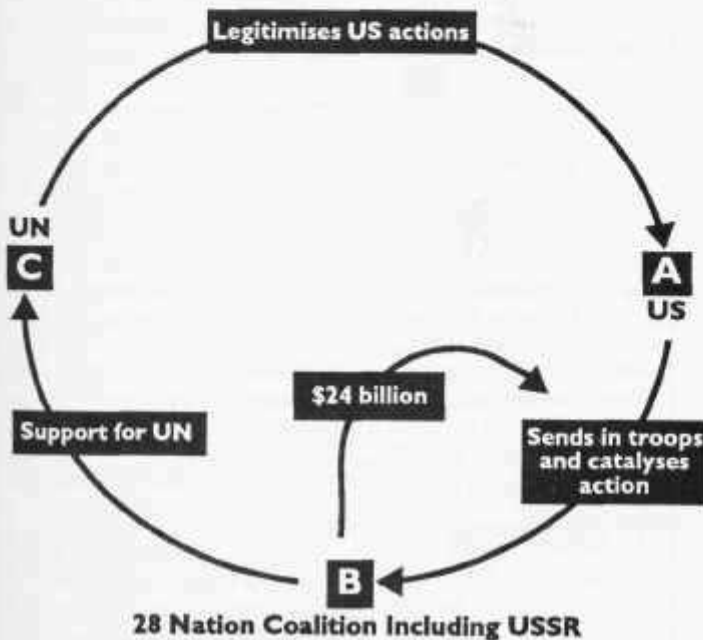


Glossary Of Terms

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
UN – United Nations
EC – European Community
G7 – Group of Seven
IMF – International Monetary Fund
CFE – Conventional Forces Europe
START – Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
WEU – Western European Union
COE – Council of Europe
CSCE – Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
AL – Arab League
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CAP – Common Agricultural Policy
EMS – European Monetary System

EFTA – European Free Trade Area
GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
NPT – Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
OAS – Organisation of American States
GCC – Gulf Co-operation Council
SAARC – Southern Asian Association for Regional Co-operation
OAU – Organisation for African Unity
SEATO – South East Asian Treaty Organisation
ASEAN – Association of South East Asian Nations
SPF – South Pacific Forum
COMECON – Council for Mutual Economic Assistance

Figure 2: The New World Order As A Heterarchy
A is over B, B is over C, but C is over A.



Japan, Thailand and the 'Four Little Dragons', that real national wealth is created by a combination of tough but liberal policies, not conquest, nor a command economy. This consensus is so widespread that if it has not created the 'end of history', at least it has killed off the cold war.

The second factor is the long-term trend towards democratisation and its recent acceleration. According to surveys, the number of democracies and quasi-democracies has more than doubled since 1945 - from 47 to 108 of some 167 nations - and more than one-fifth of the world's population - USSR, Eastern Europe and parts of Africa - is trying to become democratic. We intuitively recognise that 1989 was a good year for democracy because change was so visible, but forget that since the early 1970s there has been a general trend towards liberalisation. Partly this is due to the information revolution and global marketplace, and partly to political activism, but whatever the balance of causes the statistics are impressive. Freedom House in New York, which keeps the records and publishes an annual survey of each country's progress or regress concludes, in 1990, that in 20 years there have been: 'some 30 transitions from military or one-party domination to formal civilian, elected rule, as well as 10 reversions to military rule'.

The relevance of this trend for the New World Order is obvious: democracies do not invade each other and, as Immanuel Kant pointed out, tend to keep the peace, so when their number reaches some undetermined 'critical mass' war becomes improbable. Moreover, as Paul Kennedy showed in his epochal analysis *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers*, nation-states are becoming weaker by the minute. When he wrote this in 1988 there were five 'great' powers, none of them omnipotent - China, Japan, the EEC, the Soviet Union and the US. And that is even more true today.

The debt-ridden United States only looks bright relative to the lights going out in the communist world, and although it is called the last great 'superpower', economically - the basis for real power - it is more an 'impotentate'. After the second world war it dominated the global economy accounting for some 44% of world trade; today it has slipped into the low 20s and in the not too distant future it is likely to reach its 'natural' level of 16%. These statistics suggest another emergent truth: nobody controls a dominant share of the world market - everyone is now interdependent, or more to the point *dependent* on foreign markets. The New World Order is emerging from this fact as much accidentally as by design, because the formerly 'great powers' must now form coalitions to achieve their ends, and this means negotiation and compromise.

This leads to the basic confusion con-

'The common market will keep the German Gulliver passive and a willing friend of the remaining 11 Lilliputian states'



cerning the NWO: now that the balance of terror between the US and the USSR has ended, what will replace the formerly stable bipolarity? Arguments favour either a multipolar net of countries acting together, or the unipolar action of the US, first to send troops into Saudi Arabia. Before facing this question there is a bigger historical point to be made.

As Paul Kennedy argues in his study of power, significantly subtitled *Economic Change And Military Conflict From 1500 To 2000*, the nation-state was the most fundamental creation of the modern era, which most historians date to the Renaissance and the collapse of the huge medieval empires. Nations and nationalism were the twin products of modernity and we are seeing the slow eclipse with the rise of the post-modern world. This may sound improbable at the moment, given the recent outburst of national feeling in the Baltic states and Soviet (dis)Union, but the question is whether these events constitute the larger world trend. I doubt it, for various reasons.

One of these is mentioned by Kennedy - the inherent chaos created by the modern system of national sovereignty: The international system (of the past five centuries), whether it is dominated for a time by six Great Powers or only two, remains anarchical - that is, there is no greater authority than the sovereign, egotistical nation-state'. Egotism? Eight selfish nation-states with nuclear bombs, or 30 in three years time operating like Saddam Hussein, will not make nationalism a defensible proposition. There are well-known reasons why the strength of the nation-state is declining, but above all because its size is both too big and too small to deal with current problems - world pollution, the mass migration of population, global recession and so forth. Large economic areas, such as the EC, and smaller regional economies such as that of Los Angeles, are chewing away national sovereignty from both ends of the spectrum. Multinational corporations and global communications may soon finish off the meal.

However, the main political reason for the shift to a post-modern world is the extraordinary growth in supranational organisations since the second world war. Again this is not the result of some grand design, but the consequence of thousands of limited agreements between different nations - multinational treaties and negotiations such as Start (for nuclear weapons reduction), or exclusive trading clubs such as G7 (the Group of Seven) or political fraternities such as the OAS (the Organisation of American States, founded in 1948).

Gerald Segal's *Guide To The World Today* lists 100 such acronymic bodies while David Held, in an article titled *The Decline Of The Nation State*, mentions no less than 4,980. He shows that 'Inter-governmental organisations' such as Nato have grown from 123 in 1951 to

365 in 1984, and 'International non-governmental organisations' have multiplied over the same period from 832 to 4,615². To Thatcherites it will sound horrific, the runaway growth of *homo bureaucratiscus*, the cancerous spread of international quangos whose number, if we study the figures, doubles every 10 years. If this keeps up by the year 2050 nation-states will disappear because they won't be able to afford the perquisites for all the mandarins.

However, the bright side to this growth is that it checks, dampens, or in a phrase which has caught on about Germany, 'ties down' the nation in a web of commitments. Here, even Margaret Thatcher, Paddy Ashdown and the Labour Party agreed, was an important role of the EC. It will, in the words of a senior official in Bonn, transfix Germany, 'just as Gulliver was tied to the ground by the Lilliputians'. Already some of its sovereignty is lost to the European Parliament and Nato, as well as countless lesser bodies, but the strongest snare will be the Common Market. This, if fully forged as Mitterrand wishes, will keep the German Gulliver passive and a willing friend of the remaining 11 Lilliputian states.

The acronymic net is an important part of the New World Order, but the question is - how does it work effectively? In general, 4,980 alliance and treaties do restrain spontaneous egotistical behaviour (and much else besides), but it is the particular organisations to which a nation belongs and their importance - not number - which is the key to stability. To understand this, we need a kind of instant stock report of the acronyms and a measurement of their restraining power: a more sophisticated version of the following chart (Figure 1).

At the top of the market are five organisations - Nato, the EC, G7, IMF and the UN. In terms of binding power these blue-chips rate from seven to nine out of 10, depending on whether the issue is military, political or economic, but there are no international acronyms ranged above them.

In the middle of the market, fluctuating between 4 and 6, are a series of associations ranging from the previously obscure WEU (Western European Union), the political equivalent of Nato and fast rising in stature because of the Iraqi invasion, to Gatt (the 93-member General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). Then at the base, the underperformers with a rating of 0 to 3, are such things as the Warsaw Pact and Bretton Woods system (defunct since the 1970s and the floating dollar). As these numbers and their fluctuations indicate, the acronyms assert their restraining power through collective psychology and a few legal penalties. Any nation, like Iraq, may disregard and flout the top five acronyms if it wants, but it will then pay a price, usually much too great for a country to afford. So conformity to the strictures of, say, the IMF is the rule. At the bottom of the table are those

clubs, like Comecon (the Eastern bloc version of the EC), which most countries have disregarded and even the members have now quit. The club analogy brings out the fact that communist countries which applied for membership used to be 'blackballed' from institutions like Gatt, that indeed their power is more a matter of economic influence than military coercion.

Since 1987 and the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan the big acronym that negotiated this settlement - the UN - has been rising steadily in power. It has mediated one conflict after another, such as the long Iran/Iraq war, when one side would not speak to the other. Because of such successes, and now the extraordinary consensus concerning the Kuwait invasion, the UN is beginning to play the role which its founders envisaged in 1945. Not only did the UN Security Council adopt economic and military sanctions against Iraq four days after the invasion, but by December it had passed 12 tough resolutions, the strongest in its 45-year existence. Most importantly, and perhaps *faute de mieux*, it became the forum for legitimising counteraction.

Again like a club, its power is primarily symbolic - but the symbolism of a well-observed law. The Arab League and most of the countries of the world only support the US unilateral involvement in the Gulf under a UN umbrella. This amounts to real negative power, the ability to 'contain' America's quite natural inclination to act on its own self-interest alone. President Bush cannot risk a US-led pre-emptive strike against Iraq unless he is prepared to lose the Arab backing and world consensus he himself created through his hectic telephone-diplomacy during August. In effect, through repeated negotiations with the Soviet Union, EC countries, Arab countries, China and Japan, Bush had inadvertently woven a tight web of commitments which tied the US firmly to the ground like Gulliver, with the UN holding most of the cables. The United States and the United Nations have now interacted for five months, building up troops from 28 countries, setting in place a \$24 billion funding package, and this virtually ensures that America will not act without the authority of the Security Council.

The longer the tenuous peace remains, the clearer to both sides become the awful consequences of war. To Hussein annihilation; to the West considerable casualties, the destruction of the oil fields in Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, oil at \$60 - \$100 a barrel, deep world recession, vast pollution, starvation in the Third World and permanent Arab hostility to Israel and its Western supporters. The consequences of continuing the state of tenuous non-war are marginally less awful: the survival of Saddam Hussein and his acquisition of the nuclear bomb. Again this is why the UN may be the only way out. As it passes more and more resolutions

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week after week, and solidifies world opinion against Hussein, then the more sanctions bite and the greater the internal pressure against Hussein.

The underlying structure of the New World Order has emerged stage by stage, without design but as the logical consequence of a militarily strong but economically weak US and the fortuitous truth that world opinion could unite against the clearly despicable act of a minor power. Almost any other invasion wouldn't have produced this structure. It needed a threat to a world resource, oil, a clearly aggressive act, a big enough military threat to necessitate united action, and the personification of evil, against which a consensus could be built. Hussein's onslaught fits each count, and thus a counter-structure was brought into being.

The basement and first storey were put in place on August 6 and 10 when the UN Security Council adopted economic and military sanctions against Iraq and then declared the invasion 'null and void' by a unanimous vote. This, coupled with Bush's telephone diplomacy, set the stage for the Cairo summit of August 11, when 12 of 20 Arab League nations voted for military action against Iraq. Co-operation and consensus increased when 10 days later the UN sanctioned the interception of Iraq's shipping. It became worldwide when Japan, which sits on the fence when it comes to intractable foreign problems, started to open its coffers promising \$1 billion foreign aid to the Gulf States.

The second and third storeys of the structure were added on September 10 at the Helsinki summit, perhaps the most crucial stages in the whole construction for they effectively put the US under the UN net for the first time. Here, having produced the emergent system of world government, President Bush backed sagaciously away from directing it too openly. He nodded eagerly when Gorbachev said: 'No single country can provide the leadership needed', and accepted the Soviet Union's help in developing 'a new regional security structure' for the Arab world. Once the USSR and US agreed to act together and under the UN umbrella it conferred operative legitimacy to this organisation. Before this time the US and UK were saying no UN resolution was needed for action; afterwards they tacitly changed their mind and by November 29 - with resolution 678 - they accepted that force could only be legitimised by a UN vote.

The final storeys of the building were the confirmation by the rest of the world of the existing structure; Saudi Arabia and the Kuwait government in exile promised to contribute \$12 billion to the international effort, Japan promised \$3 billion more, Britain announced it would send men and tanks to the Gulf and 25 countries followed suit. Further resolutions by the United Na-

tions, such as support for an air blockade and release of hostages, have only strengthened the structure. The basic architecture was in place by October and other acronyms such as the IMF, and other nations such as Egypt, just added embellishment.

What does this strange building look like? It goes against the habitual view of power structures as overarching hierarchies controlling everything. Hierarchical power is not the only kind of system that works, and in this case the structure is the typical post-modern heterarchy - a logical system best exemplified by the game 'stone, paper, scissors'.

In this game paper beats stone by wrapping it, stone beats scissors by crushing them and scissors beat paper by cutting it; or formally A is over B, B is over C, *but* C is over A (in a hierarchy there is no such loop). In other words, it is both the traditional hierarchy *and* an egalitarian network, a hybrid system which if not pure, is all the more effective and enjoyable to play because everyone can win. The heterarchical structure is enshrined in the US constitution as the 'balance of powers' between executive, legislature and judiciary and it is my argument that just such a form has emerged as the outer structure of the NWO. This is best shown in a diagram (Figure 2).

One virtue of this model is that it answers a question which has exercised so many think tanks: is the new order based on the unilateral action of the US, or the multilateral power of many nations? The structure may act like the proverbial 'hidden hand' as an unintended result of self-interested motives, but it is clearly both unipolar and multipolar. When Kuwait was invaded, the only power strong and determined enough to act was the US, and it sent in troops (A). Then through multilateral negotiations Bush, Thatcher and other leaders brought into being a group of nations (B) who gave their support to the US if, and only if, military action would go under the umbrella of the UN (C). The UN then continued to legitimise the action which it, as a club without military power, could not take. Thus we have a classic heterarchical balance of power between three basic entities, albeit one of them is a coalition of nations and not a formal body. But the truth is the unipolar US cannot act without this multipolar collection and the UN; nor can the other two act without the US, and so on in a continual circle.

Feedback loops guarantee that no institution or collection has supreme power. Have we then slid from the modern world of egotistical nations to the post-modern world of interdependent bodies? Only tentatively. The NWO, while in place and working for five months, would obviously survive neither a violent rift between the USSR and US, nor unilateral action by the US. But it could outlive a war against Iraq, as it is now UN-sanctioned, and be further strengthened, if the military action

were conducted with Arab approval. War is bound to be a catastrophe for all sides, but if it occurs then it must be conducted to 'win the peace', that is to cement the NWO in place. This means keeping the USSR and the Arabs behind the consensus, which further entails using the UN as an effective device to settle the Palestinian issue. The logic of the situation has pushed the US towards realising this, even if it continues to deny direct and immediate linkage: a long-term Middle East peace must deal with this issue next.

It would be a silver lining to Hussein's invasion if it led inadvertently to the first system of world government that worked. The longer the crisis continues to solidify the balance of power, the more possible it is to become institutionalised and permanent, especially if people understand that it has worked for five months. In a way it is not too different from the organisation set up 45 years ago within the UN, where the Security Council - dominated by the then five superpowers - was seen as providing the main police force. Because of the cold war this force never became operative and now, with the US as the main military power, it is external to the UN - but still effectively under its sanction. The hope must be that over time and through repeated usage - like many precedents - this relationship would become institutionalised.

This is an opportunity that only presents itself at rare moments in history, when a war is over or about to start and nations have a breathing space to think about larger questions than immediate self-interest. Of course the pressures against a continued consensus are great - the mass migration of populations, the rise of nationalisms in the USSR, the chronic Arab-Israeli dispute, and the increasing divide between the north and south, or First and Third Worlds. In terms of pressures, however, these are countered by many global forces - pollution, population increase, the communication revolution and thousands of multinational bodies and institutions - which know no national boundaries. The verdict is still open and hangs in the balance. What is clear is that world stability now depends on a complex interaction between three basic amalgams - the UN, the US and a collection of other nations. In such a heterarchical system consensus is hard, but as events have shown, not impossible to achieve. In the long term, the tenuous New World Order should be brought, as intended by the world in 1945, within the purview of the United Nations.O

1 For the complex question of which countries are democratic ('free, partly free and not free') see *Freedom In The World 1989-1990*, the annual survey by Freedom House, NYC.

2 For the discussion of supra- and international bodies see Gerald Segal, *Guide To The World Today*, Simon and Schuster, 2nd edn 1988, and David Held, *The Decline Of The Nation State*, in *New Times*, edited by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, Lawrence and Wishart, 1989.

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